[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the duty of railway travellers agents is to provide tickets for those passenger who standing in a long queue. Does the hon. Minister want to appoint agents on the pattern of airlines agents?

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I do not know about the type of agents in airlines. But the agents who buy railway tickets, people used to buy ticket from them in an unauthorised manner and the railways used to take action against them. As per the directions of Supreme Court in 1985, for the convenience of such passengers who are unable to buy tickets in the queue, these agents have been appointed to procure tickets for them on their behalf. But the authority to sell tickets lies only with the railways and such tickets can only be sought by authorised agents.

SHRI CHINTAMAN WANAGA : Mr. Speaker, Sir, while asking my second supplementary, I would like to tell that half of the passengers belong to Mumbai..... *(Interruptions)*

11.57 hrs.

At this stage, some slogans from the Public Gallery were heard

....(Interruptions)

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Please asks the question.

....(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : They will take care of it. I know of it. It happens.

.....(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : He is asking this question.

[Translation]

SHRI CHINTAMAN WANAGA : Half of the railway passengers in the country belong to Mumbai. If you happen to go to any of the railway stations you will find very long queue of passengers standing to buy tickets. One has to stand in waiting in the queue for hours together. So my question is whether then hon. Minister proposes to appoint railway travellers service agents for current booking railway tickets in Mumbai.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : Whenever such requirements are felt, the railways make advertisements for appointment of such agents.

SHRI MANGAT RAM SHARMA : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister of Railways whether it is a fact that the people of Jammu-Kashmir and particularly the people of eastern States where railways have not reached fully in the whole state have to face lots of difficulties in procuring tickets.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : What can I do? Please ask the question now. Time is not there.

[Translation]

SHRI MANGAT RAM SHARMA : I would like to ask the Hon. Minister whether any booking office is proposed to be set up in those areas where the railway station are at a long distance so that people of such areas may get railway ticket and reservation easily. For example in Jammu-Kashmir there are areas like Doda, Sri Nagar Valley, Leh. Poonch, Rojouri but there is only one railway station i.e. in Jammu only. Due to this people from distant areas have to face lots of difficulties in procuring tickets by coming to Jammu. Does he propose to open railway ticket booking counters in distant areas so that people may buy railway ticket easily.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : Such ticket booking counters are already being opened and the area where railways have not reached so far in North Eastern States there also reservation facilities have been provided.

12.00 hrs.

We have also made arrangements for computerised ticket booking in Kashmir. We would also provide ticket-booking facility in the place which the hon. member has mentioned here, I request him to kindly send us the proposal in regard to those places and we shall look into that.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[English]

Internet Users

*326. SHRI SULTAN SALAHUDDIN OWAISI :
SHRI AMAR PAL SINGH :

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government are aware that thousands of internet users in the country have been making international phone calls through the internet telephone system for the last few years;

(b) if so, the details of losses to the exchequer during each of the last three years till date; and

(c) the measures taken or proposed to be taken to check such losses of revenue?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) Extensive use of Internet Telephony is not possible at present in India due to technical constraints and high costs. The voice which can be derived is uncommercial & unreliable and requires use of costly equipment. This is further restricted due to legal bindings on the Internet users against any misuse.

(b) Internet Services were started only in August, 1995 on a limited scale. It is not possible to estimate possible revenue loss on this account. The loss, however, is expected to be a small one.

(c) At the application stage the Internet user is made to sign an agreement giving a commitment for not using Internet Telephony. His connection can be disconnected for violation of agreement.

Increase in Compensation Amount

*327 DR. KRUPASINDHU BHOI :
SHRI G.A. CHARAN REDDY :

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government propose to increase the compensation to be paid to the victims of rail accidents including incidents like sabotage, bomb blast etc;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the number of accidents due to sabotage during 1997;

(d) whether the Government have referred any case of sabotage for CBI inquiry; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN) : (a) and (b) Keeping in view the rise in Consumer Price Index, a proposal is under consideration to increase the amount of compensation to be paid to the dependents of deed and injured rail passengers and platform ticket holders who are involved in train accidents or untoward incidents as defined under Sections 124 and 124-A of the Railways Act, 1989.

(c) Due to sabotage five derailments have taken place during 1997.

(d) No, Sir.

(e) Does not arise.

Interest Rate on Loans for Wind Energy Projects

*328. SHRI ANAND RATNA MAURYA : Will the Minister of NON-CONVENTIONAL ENERGY SOURCES be pleased to state :

(a) the total loan given for setting up Wind Energy Projects during the Eighth Plan;

(b) whether the interest rate has been reduced on the loan so given;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the date from which the reduced rate of interest are likely to be made effective?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF NON-CONVENTIONAL ENERGY SOURCES (CAPT. JAI NARAYAN PRASAD NISHAD) : (a) to (d) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

(a) A total loan amount of Rs. 461.25 crores was provided by Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA), a Public Sector Undertaking under the Ministry of Non-conventional Energy Sources, for setting up wind power projects during the Eighth Five Year Plan. In addition, other Financial Institutions and Commercial banks also provide loans for commercial wind power projects.

(b) to (d) IREDA have revised their interest rate for wind power projects, sanctioned on or after 7.6.97. The details of interest rates for wind power projects are given below :

	Scheme	Interest Rate (p.a.) Exclusive of Interest Tax	Revised Interest Rate (p.a.) Exclusive of Interest Tax
1.	Project Financing		
	(a) International Funds	16.5%	15.5%
	(b) IREDA Funds	17.0%	16.0%
2.	Equipment Financing	17.0%	17.0%

FICCI Report on Telecom

*329. SHRI UTTAM SINGH PAWAR :
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY :

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have received any report from the Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry on the future of Telecommunication and information technology in India;

(b) if so, the salient features thereof; and

(c) the reaction of the Government in regard thereto?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) and (b) The Report has been received on 6th August, 1997. The Report deals with various aspects of development of the telecom sector in India. It enunciates a strategy for the development of the telecom sector in the country covering both services and manufacturing by following a four point strategy, namely:

(a) a international vision and developing a global mindset;

(b) Increasing substantially the telecom market in India;

(c) Developing global levels of competitiveness by the industry; and

(d) Enlightened and imaginative policy framework by the Government.